EMODnet Thematic Lot n°5 – Human Activities

CINEA/EMFAF/2024-25/3.6/4500083509

Start date of the project: 03/03/2025 (24 months)

Operational Phase

Interim Progress Report (1)

Reporting Period: 03/03/2025 – 02/03/2025

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1 Introduction

The contract for the this phase of EMODnet Human Activities entered into force on 3 March 2025 and will expire on 2 March 2027. The consortium that was awarded the contract is the same that developed and managed the portal in the previous phases:

- Cogea (lead company), Italy
- AND International, France
- AZTI Tecnalia, Spain
- CETMAR, Spain
- Eurofish International Organisation, Denmark
- Lovell Johns (Subcontractor), UK

EMODnet Human Activities has been a member of the EMODnet family since September 2013. Since it was not included in the first EMODnet phase from 2009 to 2012, in the previous EMODnet phases (2013-2016 and 2017-2021) its main objective was to quickly build a base of data, so as to catch up with the other portals.

With the current phase of EMODnet, the focus is on maintaining and enhancing services where marine data and data products on the spatial extent and intensity of human activities in the ocean are made interoperable and freely available. In addition, one of the core objectives of the current phase is the centralisation process, which was completed in January 2023.

According to the contract, the EMODnet Human Activities thematic group is mandated to build the following data themes:

- Aggregate extraction
- Aquaculture (including freshwater)
- Cultural heritage
- Desalination plants
- Dredging (e.g. navigational)
- Fisheries effort
- Fisheries zones
- Aggregated fisheries data (that is, data aggregations as made available from STEFC and/or DG MARE, when geospatially adequate)
- Military zones
- Oil and gas exploration and extraction
- Ports
- Ocean energy facilities
- Pipelines and cables
- Protected areas
- Waste disposal
- Spatial planning zones

- Wind farms
- Shipping density

Compared with the previous phase, a new data set on "aggregated fisheries data" has become part of EMODnet's official mandate. For the time being, this data set includes geospatial data on EU fishing quotas, which were made available in the previous EMODnet phase, as a voluntary contribution of the team implementing the project.

Further, even though not requested by the contract, the Human Activities team are also maintaining a number of additional datasets, such as:

- Algae production facilities (including spirulina)
- State of bathing water
- Fish catches
- Lighthouses
- Monthly first sales of fish
- MSFD Reporting Units
- Nuclear power plants
- Oil and gas licences
- Urban wastewater treatment

Vessel density maps remain EMODnet Human Activities' most downloaded data set/product. In 2025, due to some changes in the AIS data market, the usual data delivery resulted in a considerably lower number of records, compared with the past few years. The difference was so stark that it was decided not to elaborate density maps until the problem was solved, lest users might be misled. In the last quarter of 2025, the team managed to acquire additional AIS data to compensate the difference in the number of records. The updated density maps with 2024 data were completed in December 2025, and made available online in March 2026.

2025 also saw the development of an entirely new data set on coastal tourism, which is not part of EMODnet's contractual remit. The data set, including number of nights spent by tourists in coastal areas (at the level of municipalities), plus a few other tourism-related indicators, was built throughout 2025 and made available online in the second year of the contract.

The general objective of EMODnet Human Activities is to become the entry point for maritime data on the spatial extent and intensity of human activity in the ocean. For this reason, the project team paid special attention to collating accurate data from official sources, as well as to making user experience as friendly as possible.

Generally speaking, in terms of usage the first year of the contract confirmed a decreasing trend in number of downloads, more than compensated by an increasing trend in web services usage.

2 Update on the Tasks

Task 1: Maintain and improve a common method of access to data held in repositories

- A new data set on worldwide ship wrecks – maintained by the UK Hydrographic Office – was made available. The data set includes wrecks worldwide, though not all of them have historical value – the data set is nested under the "Cultural heritage" data theme.
- A new data theme on tourism was also completed, though it went live at the beginning of the second year of the contract. The data set includes the number of nights spent by tourist in coastal municipalities (Local Administrative Units – LAUs), as well as other indicators available at NUTS-3 level, such as % of excellent bathing waters, tourism intensity, tourism diversity, number of beds, tourism density, dominant tourism typology, number of blue flag sites, share of protected areas, share of accommodation in areas with high nature value, and cultural assets density.
- Generally speaking, all other data sets received their yearly update.

Task 2: Construct products from one or more data sources that provide users with information about the distribution and quality of parameters in time and space

- Route density maps updated until January 2026
- Vessel density maps were supposed to be updated with 2024 data over the course of 2025. However, due to a few mergers and acquisitions in the satellite AIS data market, our usual provider was unable to deliver a dataset with the usual (on average) number of records. The satellite data received had a considerable lower number of records, to the point that making the maps anyway might have misled users into believing that vessel density had decreased throughout Europe. Our team negotiated other solutions with alternative data providers. Towards the end of the year, an additional set of satellite AIS data was purchased, with the aim of making up for the loss of records from the usual providers. This made it possible to complete the update of the vessel density maps, which went live in the second year of the contract.

Task 3: Develop and improve procedures for machine-to-machine connections to data and data products, in a common manner across the EMODnet service

- GeoServer configuration was updated to improve the usability of Human Activities data in response to Helpdesk requests. Key changes included setting proper data projections for layers with one-to-many relationships to resolve issues with spatial filters in WFS, and assigning unique IDs for features instead of random ones to enhance WFS functionality. Additionally, support for external stylesheets was enabled to allow custom WMS styling, as requested by the European Atlas of the Seas.
- GeoServer was also upgraded to version 2.27.1 for security reasons
- To strengthen the security posture of our OGC web services (WFS, WMS, WCS), we have implemented Cloudflare's managed Web Application Firewall (WAF). All EMODnet Human Activities traffic is now routed through Cloudflare, providing layered protection including:
    - Obscured origin IPs, reducing exposure to scanning, enumeration, and bypass attempts.
    - Enhanced visibility into usage patterns, threat activity, and anomalies.
    - Always-on DDoS protection, mitigating volumetric and application-layer attacks.
    - Bot mitigation, blocking suspicious automated traffic.
    - Anycast edge network, ensuring resilient and low-latency access
    - Automated threat detection and blocking of:
        - SQL injection via WFS FILTER and query parameters
        - Cross-site scripting (XSS) and malicious payloads
        - OGC-specific misuse (e.g., malformed XML or suspicious GetFeature requests)

- Beyond standard operating system security updates and Ubuntu Pro Extended Security Maintenance (ESM), the EMODnet Human Activities server is now safeguarded by CYDEFENCE, a managed service providing continuous vulnerability management and remediation.

Task 4: Fulfil the EMODnet Central Portal requirements that ensure all data and data products can be found, viewed and downloaded with ease (from the Central Portal)

- Development of European Marine Use Dataset (EU-MUD) product version alpha: This product is the result of the former task "INSPIRE data model" and involves the automatic harmonisation of several EMODNET human activities datasets to a unified "Land/marine Use" product using a single data model adapted from INSPIRE Land Use model.
- Metadata updated to reflect CC-BY attribution

Task 5: Provide content for the reserved space for each thematic group within the EMODnet Central Portal, following any necessary requirements

- Contributed content for a blog post: https://emodnet.ec.europa.eu/en/blog-8-december-2025-behind-scenes-emodnet-human-activities-vessel-density-maps

Task 6: Ensure coherence with the efforts of the Regional Sea Conventions (RSC) and other relevant actors

- No meetings with RSCs took place in the first year of the contract.

Task 7: Contribute to the implementation of the EU legislation and broader initiatives for open data, particularly on issues of standardisation, interoperability and availability of reporting data, including by non-EU organisations, when relevant

- In March 2025, the third loop of the Technical Expert Group on MSP data was launched, during which a dedicated working group was established to enhance the visualisation of the MSP data package through the development of a Styled Layer Descriptor (SLD), specifically designed for EMODnet. The activity is still ongoing
- A new disclaimer regarding MSP boundaries was added to the metadata for this dataset further to a request from Malta, due to a controversy between Malta and Italy.
- A methodology was developed to generate the European Marine Use dataset (EU-MUD) product. This product is the result of harmonising the different EMODnet spatial datasets on human activities (or "uses") in the marine domain into a single data model, adapted from the INSPIRE "Sampled Land Use" scheme

Task 8: Monitor quality/performance and deal with user feedback

Task 9: Dedicate specific resources to the EMODnet Central Portal Task Force

Status of the Milestones and Deliverables listed in the workplan					
Milestone/Deliverable in numerical order	**WP**	**Date due**	**Status (To do/ Delivered/ Delayed)**	**Date delivered**	**If Delayed: reason for delay and expected delivery date**
e.g. M1: xxx	WP1	Dd/mm/yyyy	Delivered	Dd/mm/yyyy	…
e.g. D1.1: xxx	WP1	Dd/mm/yyyy	Delayed		…

Status of the Milestones and Deliverables listed in the workplan					
Milestone/Deliverable in numerical order	**WP**	**Date due**	**Status (To do/ Delivered/ Delayed)**	**Date delivered**	**If Delayed: reason for delay and expected delivery date**

3 Work Package updates

[Using the Work Package as a header, list the activities that occurred since the start of the project phase. When describing each Work Package, please also refer to the corresponding Tender task(s) (specified in the relevant Tender Specifications). Max 2 pages per work package.]

WP1 – Xxx

Covering Task(s): xxx

Lorem ipsum

WP2 – Xxx

Covering Task(s): xxx

Lorem ipsum

…

4 Identified issues: status and actions taken

*[Provide an **overview of issues** identified by CINEA (Table A) - new as well as pending ones, the status of those issues, and actions taken to address them and/or roadmap with remaining actions planned to resolve the issues, since the start of the project phase. In Table B, provide information about any issues and challenges identified by yourself.]*

A. Priority issue(s) identified and communicated by CINEA/ DG MARE/ SECRETARIAT				
Priority issue	**Status (Pending/ Resolved)**	**Action(s) taken/ remaining actions planned**	**Date due**	**Date resolved**
EMODnet - Human Activities provide ECAS userid for EMODnet Portal Drupal	Resolved	Provided userid	None	04/03/2025
EM-1948 Broken metadata and download links in the EMODnet viewer	Resolved	Fixed a link in the metadata	None	
EM-1217 High - Geoserver < 2.27.1 Unauthenticated XXE via WMS GetMap (CVE-2025-58360)	Resolved	Updated to a new version		02/02/2026

B. Issues / challenges identified by the thematic assembly group itself				
Priority issue / challenge	**Status (Pending/ Resolved)**	**Action(s) taken / remaining actions planned**	**Date due**	**Date resolved**
Error in wind farm layer	Resolved	A user found that, upon downloading the wind farm data layer, coordinates were swapped. It was explained that this behaviour results from the OGC WFS 1.1.0 specification, which mandates latitude/longitude (Y/X) axis order for EPSG:4326, while the ESRI Shapefile format expects longitude/latitude (X/Y). As a result, coordinate axes appear reversed when exporting to SHAPE-ZIP. This is a well-known interoperability issue between WFS 1.1.0 and Shapefile encoding, not		Q4 2025

B. Issues / challenges identified by the thematic assembly group itself				
Priority issue / challenge	**Status (Pending/ Resolved)**	**Action(s) taken / remaining actions planned**	**Date due**	**Date resolved**
		specific to GeoServer or GeoNetwork. Other formats (e.g., GeoJSON, GML) are unaffected and handle coordinates correctly.		

5 Allocation of project resources

[Provide information about the efforts spent since the start of the project phase (provide the date) on achieving the main objectives and tasks of the project. Provide an overview of resource usage (percentage of project resources) divided into the following categories (if no precise information is available, provide estimate indication instead).]

Information on the allocation of project resources	
Categories	Resource usage[1] (%)
Making data and metadata interoperable and available	40%
Preparing data products	15%
Preparing web-pages, viewing or search facilities	5.5%
Managing user feedback	2%
Project management	5%
Outreach and communication activities	3%
Others	29.5%

[1] Provide the workings of your calculations, *i.e*. percentage allocation of the total amount awarded.

6 User feedback

Overview of user feedback and/or requests received in this project phase							
Date	**Organisation**	**Type of user feedback (e.g. technical, case study, etc.) and short description of the feedback received**	**Means of contact**	**Response time**	**Status of user query (Resolved/ Pending)**	**Measures taken to resolve the query**	**Status: if not (yet) resolved/ pending, explain reason why and expected timeline**
27/01/2025	UCC	Question Regarding Datasets on EMODnet Map Viewer	Helpdesk	1 month	Resolved	User sought clarification on vessel density and route density maps	
24/03/2025	EMODnet 1994	Request for Vessel AIS data - Strait of Gibraltar	Helpdesk	Same day	Resolved	User asked for raw AIS data. It was explained that this cannot be shared due to restrictions	
31/03/2025	EMODnet 2007	Question about providing me with historic maps of the ship routes in the Mediterranean sea	Helpdesk	1 day	Resolved	User asked for historical vesel density maps. Replied that there are no maps available before 2017	
08/04/2025	EMODNET-2010	Enquiry on the EMODnet dataset desalination plants	Helpdesk	One day	Resolved	User sought clarification on certain attributes. The clarification was	

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						provided the very next day	
16/04/2025	CESI	Question on aquaculture	Helpdesk	Same day	Resolved	User asked why there is no aquaculture data in the Adriatic Sea. Explain that there is partial coverage as Italy does not make all of their data available online. N.B. Aquaculture data for Italy were made available in 2026	
08/07/2025	SINTEF	Request for attending Advisory Board in Pathfinder project	Helpdesk	3 months	Resolved	Explained that we don't sit on advisory boards on behalf of EMODnet	
20/05/2025	HPC	Request for data	Helpdesk	1 month	Resolved	User asked to have cable and pipeline data in vector format. Explained how to download it.	

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03/06/2025	EMODNET-2053	Estonian MSP data	Helpdesk	3 days	Resolved	User informed us that a link in the Estonian MSP was broken. Link was fixed	
16/06/2025	EMODNET-2055	Web services issue with route density maps	Helpdesk	4 days	Resolved	User couldn't get data via web services. They realised the issue was on their side before we could look into it	
12/07/2025	IUAV	Visualisation of route density maps	Helpdesk	1 day	Resolved	Shared a tutorial to plot the density maps in QGIS	
30/07/2025	Octophin	Advisory Councils geometries to replace existing EMODnet Regional Advisory Councils	Helpdesk	Replied on the same day. Then user got back to us after a few weeks	Resolved	Metadata provided	
04/08/2025	n.a.	Vessel density in Tuscan Archipelago	Help desk	Same day	Resolved	User needed a custom extraction of	

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						vessel density data of the Tuscan Archipelago.	
22/10/2025	n.a.	Error in wind farm layer	Helpdesk	4 days	Resolved	A user found that, upon downloading the wind farm data layer, coordinates were swapped. It was explained that this behaviour results from the OGC WFS 1.1.0 specification, which mandates latitude/longitude (Y/X) axis order for EPSG:4326, while the ESRI Shapefile format expects longitude/latitude (X/Y). As a result, coordinate axes appear reversed when exporting to SHAPE-ZIP. This is a well-known	

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Date	**Organisation**	**Type of user feedback (e.g. technical, case study, etc.) and short description of the feedback received**	**Means of contact**	**Response time**	**Status of user query (Resolved/ Pending)**	**Measures taken to resolve the query**	**Status: if not (yet) resolved/ pending, explain reason why and expected timeline**
						interoperability issue between WFS 1.1.0 and Shapefile encoding, not specific to GeoServer or GeoNetwork. Other formats (e.g., GeoJSON, GML) are unaffected and handle coordinates correctly.	
08/12/2025	SURIMI Project	SURIMI project looking for "2025 - Fisheries effort, landings, catches, capacity, biological data up to 2024."	Helpdesk	1 month	Resolved	A user signalled that potentially relevant fishery-related data are available from the JRC. The team replied that these are already being considered for future inclusions	
28/01/2026	European Court of Auditors	ECA noted that Natura 2000 data set was updated by the EEA, but the update was not yet available on EMODnet	Helpdesk	Same day	Resolved	In the past, the EEA used to update the data set in April; that's why the old	

Overview of user feedback and/or requests received in this project phase							
Date	**Organisation**	**Type of user feedback (e.g. technical, case study, etc.) and short description of the feedback received**	**Means of contact**	**Response time**	**Status of user query (Resolved/ Pending)**	**Measures taken to resolve the query**	**Status: if not (yet) resolved/ pending, explain reason why and expected timeline**
						version was still online	
29/01/2026	SHOM	A user sought clarification on the colour ramp chosen to symbolise the vessel density maps	Helpdesk	10 days	Resolved	Redirected to the publication that outlines the full method	
19/02/2026	n.a.	A user asked if vessel density is available before 2017	Helpdesk	4 days	Resolved	Explained that it's not available	
23/02/2025	XODUS	Clarification on vessel density maps and average values	Helpdesk	Same day	Resolved	Explanation provided	

7 Meetings/events held/attended & planned

A. Meetings/events organised and attended in this project phase					
Date	**Location**	**Type event (internal or external meeting; training/ workshop)**	**Was a presentation given? (yes/no + short description)**	**Meeting attended (A) / organised (O)**	**Short description and main results (# participants, agreements made, etc.)**
25-27/03/2025	Online	OpenSeaLab Hackhaton	Yes. Short motivational speech(es) published prior to the event to encourage participants	A	
09/04/2025	Online	Meeting with the European Marinas Network	No	A	JPI Oceans are establishing a knowledge hub of marinas to share sensor data
15/04/2025	Online	Meeting with Protected Seas	No	A	Discussion on how (and if) to incorporate Protected Seas' data into EMODnet
05/06/2025	Online	Meeting with TransEuropeMarinas and European Boating Industry	No	A	EMODnet, TransEuropeMarinas, and European Boating Industry are working together to create a data set of EU marinas
23/09/2025	Online	EMODnet for NGOs workshop	Yes	A	Event to present EMODnet data portfolio relevance for NGOs
19/09/2025	Online	EU4Algae & EABA webinar on improving algae-related data collection	Yes	A	The presentation focused on algae-related data available on EMODnet and how to fill data gaps. Incidentally, thanks to the meeting we discovered a new source of marine finfish

A. Meetings/events organised and attended in this project phase					
Date	**Location**	**Type event (internal or external meeting; training/ workshop)**	**Was a presentation given? (yes/no + short description)**	**Meeting attended (A) / organised (O)**	**Short description and main results (# participants, agreements made, etc.)**
					aquaculture data in Italy, which was later incorporated into EMODnet
24/11/2025	Brussels	Internal meeting	Yes	O	Usual partners meeting that took place during the Jamboree
10/12/2025	Online	Meeting with SURIMI project	No	O	The meeting discussed how EMODnet data can support the SURIMI project and what other fishery-related data can be ingested
SUM				**O**	**Total # of meetings organised =**
SUM				**A**	**Total # of meetings attended =**

B. Meetings/events planned in the future				
Date	**Location**	**Type event (meeting, training (workshop), etc.)**	**Meeting to be attended (A) / organised (O)**	**Short description and main expected outcomes**

8 Communication assets

A. Communication products developed				
Date	**Communication material**	**Short description (of the material, title, …) of the asset**	**Main results**	**Name of event at which material was disseminated (if applicable)**
09/12/2025	Technical blog post	Blog post on vessel density maps		

B. Planned communication products			
Date	**Communication material**	**Short description (of the material, title, …) and/or link to the asset**	**Main results expected**

A. (Co-)Authored peer-reviewed publications in this project phase					
Date of publication	**Type of publication**	**Full reference**	**ISBN**	**DOI**	**Is it open access? Yes/No**
	e.g. paper; conference proceedings; book chapter; …				

B. Other/non-peer reviewed types of publications (co-)authored in this project phase					
Date of publication	**Type of publication**	**Full reference**	**ISBN**	**DOI**	**Is it open access? Yes/No**
	e.g. paper; conference proceedings; book chapter; …				

For a comprehensive overview of publications referring to/making use of EMODnet data and/or data products, please consult Google Scholar.

9 Monitoring indicators

[Refer to the standardised monitoring tool, i.e. Europa Analytics, to complete the indicators excel template, and provide a short explanation in the table below on the numbers and trends for each indicator when possible/applicable. Indicate clearly if monitoring was carried out using tools other than Europa Analytics.]

Comments on the progress indicators in the indicators spreadsheet		
Progress indicator	**Means of collecting figures**	**Comment**
1. Current status and coverage of total available thematic data A) Volume and coverage of available data	Matomo/ Europe Analytics/ other Please specify	Generally speaking, volume and coverage always tend to increase over time, unless a data source has to be removed. However, there might be exception. Some data sets indeed saw a decrease in volume of data available. This is due to a number of reasons. In some cases, a reorganisation of the data set led to a reduction in the total volume of data. In some others, updates resulted in fewer records, as some offshore project are cancelled. For example, if a planned wind farm is cancelled, this will result in one fewer record. Eitherway, a reduction in volume does not imply a reduction in coverage when it comes to human activities data.
What is your opinion on the data coverage within EMODnet for your thematic?		Coverage increased. Critical areas remain aquaculture, pipelines and cables, where coverage is patchy across the EU. During 2025, we secured data on finfish aquaculture in Italy, which used to be a huge gap. Further, a new data theme on tourism was also built.
B) Usage of data since the start of the project phase		Webstats might be misleading. They report the trend since the last final report. But the last final report covered a two-year period, whereas this interim report covers just one year. As a result, it looks like there is a decrease in usage, whereas in fact it is quite the opposite. Further, a general trend is that users are progressively using less manual downloads in favour of web service requests.
2. Current status and coverage of total number of data products A) Volume and coverage of available data products		Volume increased by definition, as a result of regular updates. Coverage remains 100% for both data products.

Comments on the progress indicators in the indicators spreadsheet		
Progress indicator	**Means of collecting figures**	**Comment**
B) Usage of data products since the start of the project phase		Interesting, despite comparing a one-year period (this report) against a two-year period (last final report) usage increased for both data products. This once more testifies to the increasing popularity of EMODnet's density maps
3. Internal and external organisations supplying/approached to supply data and data products since start of the project phase		Nothing to report
4. Online 'Web' interfaces to access or view data		Nothing to report
5.1. Daily number of page views of EMODnet Thematic entry page since the start of the contract		Moderate increase in number of views
5.2. Total number of visitors, page views, unique page views and percentage of returning visitors, since the start of the contract		Moderate increase in number of visits

The monitoring numbers reported as part of the progress monitoring of EMODnet performance are collected through Matomo and/or Europa Analytics, unless reported otherwise.

10 Recommendations for follow-up actions by the EU

- Maritime Spatial Planning: offer to organise training sessions in the Member States who have not yet adopted or are in the process of revising their plan. It would be a good occasion to make sure that the plan is released in a format that is already compliant with the EMODnet data model. The EMODnet Human Activities team are fully available to participate in these training sessions.
- Vessel density (1): several users often ask for historical vessel density map. Consider extending the time series. To be noted that this might have budget implications, so pros and cons should be carefully evaluated.
- Vessel density (2): Explore using Copernicus Sentinel AIS data to reduce costs.
- Reporting obligations: the situation with several data sets (aquaculture, cables, pipelines) has been stable for quite some years, with only little progress being made every once in a while. With no reporting obligations, it is not likely to change any time soon. Introducing reporting obligations would improve data availability considerably.
- Make available more data on fisheries: the EMODnet Human Activities team have always been available to add new data, even outside contractual obligations. Fisheries data sets currently available on EMODnet such as “monthly first sales of fish”, “fish catches” and “fishing effort” were made available years ago voluntarily. A new data set on TACs and quotas was made available under the previous contract. However, to further improve availability of fisheries-related data, the Human Activities team should be given access to Data Collection Framework and VMS data.

11 Annex: Other documentation attached

[List in Annex if you wish to provide any additional information.]